SNHU Travel Project: Final Sprint Review and Retrospective

After working on the SNHU Travel Project for the last 7 weeks I feel like I learned a lot about Agile, this is a retrospective of the overall scrum experience, say Final Sprint Review. Our cross-functioning team was tasked with piloting the Scrum/Agile development methodology for Chadatech, an attempt to step away from the archaic Waterfall model. For a long time, the Waterfall model has proved reliable through predictable projects and environments, but it has always held substantial risk when applied to a fast-moving software landscape. The sequential nature of Waterfall often sees late-stage design flaw discoveries, disconnection from the changing needs of the users and extremely high costs to make substantial changes to the project. We were tasked with testing this Agile way of working, one that values flexibility, the end user and constant iteration. Over the course of this retrospective we will analyze the contributions of each scrum role, the concepts that brought our user stories to life, our successful navigation of a major pivot and the communication strategies that were used to guide our success.

**Applying Roles: Demonstrate how the various roles on your Scrum-Agile Team specifically contributed to the success of a project. Use specific examples from your experiences.**

The Scrum framework helps to eliminate the traditional siloed style roles with a new collaborative structure designed to maximize productivity and efficiency. The teams success was a direct result of each role being fully embraced and each team member stepping up to fulfill the responsibilities of their role within this new system. As the Scrum master I learned that my primary goal was to be a servant leader and process facilitator. From hosting the initial Sprint planning and setting a reasonable pace for the team, down to the Daily scrums and helping the team keep in sync. The goal is not to manage the team but to manage the roadblocks, removing any issues we face and making sure the team stuck to the Agile methodology. As noted by the ICAGILE Team, the process of backlog refinement is less about mechanical organization and more about fostering a deep, shared understanding among the team (ICAgile, n.d.). I tried to focus the backlog refinement sessions into discussions about the *WHY* of the task rather than just the *WHAT* of the task. The Product Owner is the voice of the business and of the customer, the source of the projects vision. The product owner is responsible for managing the Product backlog and making sure that it is transparent for the team and holds an up to date prioritized list of the desired features that brings the most value to the users. For example, when there was an issue with the user stories, the product owner provided immediate clarification avoiding potential project delays. As observed in agile practice, a Product Owner may need to change a stories priority mid-sprint based on new information or technical findings (Knowledgehut, 2024). The Developer in a scrum team is much more than just a developer, it involves commitment to quality and collaboration in problem solving. The developer is instrumental in turning the user stories into high quality functioning software. As a foot soldier in the trenches of the project, the developer was key to clarifying the Definition of Done during the pivot and ensuring that time and effort was not wasted on developing features that were no longer considered a priority. This was a perfect example of the developers responsibilities in an Agile team, not to simply build the project; but to build the project the right way and efficiently. The Product Tester is not a final boss, but a continuous process monitor; integrating quality assurance into each of the development sprints. The product tester is essential to creating testing requirements and edge cases based on the user stories and the product backlog. Through analyzation of the acceptance criteria gaps and edge cases can be identified. By questioning the vague definition of “popular” or the systems inability to handle price searches that yielded no results, the problems were addressed early and quickly. The Product tester helped ensure that quality was built into the product from the very beginning.

**Completing User Stories: Describe how a Scrum-Agile approach to the software development life cycle (SDLC) helped user stories come to completion. Use specific examples from your experiences.**

The Agile approach provides a structured yet flexible path for turning a users needs into finished software. We focused on an iterative process that completed user stories and focused on the value of the finished software. We held a focus group with SNHU Travel's best customers, which, as noted by SIS International Research (2020), is an incredibly effective method for gathering in-depth qualitative data and understanding user pain points. This raw data became the foundation for the product backlog during sprint planning. We translated the feedback into what became our standard user story format: As a [user] I want to [task] so I can [goal]. This helped ensure that all the team’s work was central on the user and their needs. We categorized these stories by effort and value, allowing us to sequence our work logically and tackle the most impactful features first. Having clear acceptance criteria for each user story really makes the difference between a simple checklist and clear guidelines on what it takes for a story to be “done”. For example, with the user story about filtering travel destinations, the criteria should specify the exact behavior of the filter, what happens when no results are found, and how the results are displayed. This clarity can help reduce ambiguity, prevent scope creep, and empower our developers and testers with a shared understanding of success for each work increment.

**Handling Interruptions**: **Describe how a Scrum-Agile approach supported project completion when the project was interrupted and changed direction. Use specific examples from your experiences.**

The true test of strong development methodology is its ability to respond to unexpected change. An impediment our team experienced firsthand when new market intelligence prompted a mid-project pivot from a general travel application to a niche "detox/wellness" platform. While this shift would have potentially been disastrous in a Waterfall model, our Agile approach, grounded in the principle of "Responding to change over following a plan," equipped us to handle the challenge. Our use of short, time-boxed sprints minimized sunk costs by confining wasted work to a single sprint, avoiding the need to discard months of upfront design. As Scrum Master, I immediately facilitated an emergency backlog refinement session, allowing our Product Owner to re-prioritize the work around a new wellness MVP and the development team to collaborate on new estimates. This experience affirms the findings of (Olszewska, 2016) that responsiveness is a key competitive advantage, and it perfectly illustrates the analogy from (Cobb, 2023): a boat (Waterfall) suits a predictable journey, but our project's winding, unpredictable path required a car (Agile) that could navigate the sharp turns.

**Communication**: **Demonstrate your ability to communicate effectively with your team by providing samples of your communication. Explain why your examples were effective in their context and how they encouraged collaboration among team members.**

Email to Product Owner and Tester

To: Christy (Product Owner); Brian (Tester)

Cc: Ron (Scrum Master)

Subject: Action Plan for “Detox/Wellness” Feature Development

Hi Christy and Brian,

I am excited to start on this new direction towards health and detox travel for our clients. It’s an awesome way to help our communities and clients while encouraging healthfulness.

To ensure that the team can deliver the most valuable feature within the current schedule, I could use some clarification for solidifying my plan. Based on our meeting here are the items that I’d like to try and get us on the same page.

Christy

* + 1. Could you prioritize the top 2-3 user stories for the wellness features, as well as the minimum viable product criteria?
    2. To help focus the teams efforts could we work on reprioritizing the backlog on our cloud based tools for the team?
    3. Do we need to discuss a potential adjustment to the definition of done for a prototype release to allow for faster user feedback loops?

Brian,

* + 1. As soon as the first user story has been drafted I would like for us to connect. Hopefully we can build robust testing procedures from the beginning.

To make this painless, I propose a 30 minute backlog meeting tomorrow morning with all staff included in this email delivery. We could hash out some details and I could get the development team started with a actionable plan.

Let me know if this works for you.

Best wishes,

John R. McDonald II

Developer

SNHU Travel Scrum Team

This email is an effective example of proactive, bottom-up communication within an Agile team. Sent by the developer following the immediate aftermath of the pivot, it effectively addresses the project's new uncertainty by asking clear, role-specific questions to the Product Owner and Tester. The email encourages collaboration by not simply identifying needs but by proposing a concrete, inclusive solution: a short, focused meeting with all key stakeholders. By seeking alignment on priorities and proactively engaging the tester before development begins, the communication breaks down potential silos and ensures the team can move forward together with a shared understanding and a clear, actionable plan.

**Organizational Tools**: **Evaluate the organizational tools and Scrum-Agile principles that helped your team be successful. Reference the Scrum events in relation to the effectiveness of the tools.**

Effective communication was the engine driving our Agile methodology. Our strategy was to combine formal Scrum ceremonies such as Daily Scrums for synchronization and Sprint Retrospectives for process improvement (Atlassian, n.d.) within a powerful digital toolkit. To act as our project's "central nervous system" and a single source of truth (ICAgile, n.d.), we specifically chose Codecks. We selected this platform because its card-based, game like interface served as an excellent "information radiator," providing the at-a-glance transparency of a Kanban board while also integrating communication directly into our workflow. This combination of structured meetings and a centralized tool was crucial for managing stakeholder expectations (Namatsi & Muchelule, 2021) and enabled the rapid, targeted communication necessary to navigate our strategic pivot efficiently.

**Evaluating Agile Process**: **Assess the effectiveness of the Scrum-Agile approach for a specific project. Address each of the following:**

* **Describe the pros and cons that the Scrum-Agile approach presented during the SNHU Travel project.**
* **Determine whether or not a Scrum-Agile approach was the best approach for the SNHU Travel development project.**

The Scrum-Agile pilot for the SNHU Travel project was an unequivocal success, proving to be the only reasonable path for a project with such high potential for change. The methodology's value was most powerfully demonstrated by the ability to absorb a complete strategic pivot without project failure, showcasing an unmatched flexibility that a traditional Waterfall plan could not have survived. This adaptability, combined with iterative delivery and user feedback, ensured we built a product with high customer value and allowed us to mitigate risks early when they were cheapest to fix. Additionally, the process fostered a highly engaged and accountable team culture through daily stand-ups and transparent, collaborative problem-solving. While the approach demands strong discipline to prevent scope creep and a significant cultural shift towards trust and accountability, these challenges are manageable with proper leadership and team support. Therefore, based on the evidence from this pilot program, I strongly recommend that ChadaTech leadership begin a phased, company-wide transition to a Scrum-Agile development methodology. This should be viewed not as a mere process change, but as a strategic investment in our company's future that will increase our resilience, improve product quality, shorten our time-to-market, and foster a more empowered corporate culture, ultimately becoming one of ChadaTech's greatest competitive advantages.

References

Atlassian. (n.d.). *Four agile ceremonies, demystified*. Atlassian. Retrieved August 9, 2025, from <https://www.atlassian.com/agile/scrum/ceremonies>

Cobb, C. G. (2023). Introduction to Agile Project Management. In *The Project Managers Guide to Mastering Agile: Principles and Practices for an Adaptive Approach*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

ICAgile. (n.d.). *Mastering the art of Product Backlog refinement*. ICAgile. <https://www.icagile.com/resources/mastering-the-art-of-product-backlog-refinement>

ICAgile. (n.d.). *How to choose the right agile project management tool for your team & popular tool examples*. ICAgile. Retrieved August 9, 2025, from <https://www.icagile.com/resources/how-to-choose-the-right-agile-project-management-tool-for-your-team-and-popular-tool-examples>

How to deal with unfinished stories & tasks in an agile? (2024, September 29). *Knowledgehut*. <https://www.knowledgehut.com/blog/agile/incomplete-stories-tasks-in-an-agile-sprint>

Namatsi, P., & Muchelule, Y. (Ph.D). (2021). Effect of agile project management on project success in private firms in kenya. *Strategic Journal of Business & Change Management*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.61426/sjbcm.v8i1.1915>

Olszewska (Née Pląska), M., Heidenberg, J., Weijola, M., Mikkonen, K., & Porres, I. (2016). Quantitatively measuring a large-scale agile transformation. *Journal of Systems and Software*, 117, 258–273. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jss.2016.03.029>

SIS International Research. (2020, April 4). *Advantages of focus groups*. <https://www.sisinternational.com/advantages-of-focus-groups/>